

# Australian Garden

HISTORY

Vol. 13 No. 2 September/October 2001



**Made Over:  
new life for old sites**

Journal of the Australian  
Garden History Society



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## Mission

The Australian Garden History Society will be the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action.

### PUBLICATION

*Australian Garden History* is the official journal of the Australian Garden History Society and is published six times a year.

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### SUBSCRIPTIONS (GST inclusive)

For 1 year	Single Corporate	\$48 \$75	Family Youth (under 25 years of age)	\$63 \$20
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### ADVERTISING RATES (GST inclusive)

1/8 page	\$132	(2+ issues \$121 each)
1/4 page	\$220	(2+ issues \$198 each)
1/2 page	\$330	(2+ issues \$275 each)
Full page	\$550	(2+ issues \$495 each)
Inserts	\$440	for Australia-wide mailing Pro-rata for state-wide mailing

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**PRINTING** FRP E-mail: frp@netconnect.com.au

**ISSN** 1033-3673

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**THE NEXT ISSUE****By Channels of Coolness**

featuring ferneries, waterfall sites and fountains.

There is also news of recent work at Rippon Lea and an account of the gardens at Yarralumla.



# From the Wastelands

When selecting the site for Perth, capital of the new Swan River Colony, Lt Governor Stirling was impressed by its 'great beauty as respects scenery'. Indeed, the scenic outlook from the city over the broad estuary of the Swan River is still among its chief attractions, as it was in 1829.

The shallow, muddy reaches along the river banks had their disadvantages however, and by the end of the 19th century the reclamation of the city's mosquito prone foreshores was well under way. Today a considerable area of the Swan River floodplain has been converted through landfill to recreational areas, playing fields, urban parks and public gardens.

From the 1870s onwards, the foreshores immediately below the city were reclaimed with material largely dredged from the riverbed to provide deeper navigational channels in the shallow waters of the estuary. Eastwards on either side of the Causeway the city's refuse was dumped on the foreshores creating not only a noxious eyesore at the entrance to the city but a precedent which was followed for much of the 20th century by other local authorities with scenic but 'unusable' river frontages.<sup>1</sup>

## Refuse Dumps

Since the late 1970s the city's eastern gateway has undergone a transformation from refuse tip to parkland and the great flocks of scavenging seagulls which once frequented the area are now only a memory of a less environmentally aware era. The city approach along Great Eastern Highway from the Rivervale railway-bridge to the Causeway now passes through extensive public parklands. On the river side of the highway, the grounds of Burswood Park cover almost 100ha,

while the G.O. Edwards Park extends a similar distance on the opposite side of the highway. Burswood Park not only includes the Burswood Park golf course, but the smaller Kagoshima Park and Charles Paterson Park adjacent to the Causeway.

Burswood Park has largely been developed since the mid-1980s following construction of the Burswood Resort and Casino. Under the casino licensing agreement with the government the rehabilitation of the site and the ongoing costs of development and maintenance of the park are funded through revenue from casino operations levied at 1% of casino profits per annum. A source of income which must be the envy of many park managers in the state. As well as the 55ha public golf course, Burswood Park includes 43ha of carefully cultivated parkland and gardens planted with clipped evergreen shrubs, red-flowering erythrinias, palms, and bold seasonal displays of brightly coloured annuals. The park also features some forty species of indigenous birds which have returned to the area since its rejuvenation, abundant flocks of water fowl on its numerous lakes, the Black Swan Fountain, Citizen of the Year Lake, and heritage sculpture pathway. The G.O. Edwards Park, developed a decade earlier, is mainly planted with eucalypts, casuarinas and other indigenous species, and defines a significant shift in landscape tastes that occurred during the 1980s.<sup>2</sup>

Perth City Council began the rehabilitation of the tip site in 1978 with the development of the G.O. Edwards and Charles Paterson parks. Not surprisingly there was widespread public approval of the move and the work was accomplished with

By Oline Richards

Top:  
Queen's Gardens, Perth  
c.1900  
Courtesy West Australian  
Newspapers



major donations of materials, labour and equipment from Perth's contracting community. It was a generous spirited action made as a contribution to the state's 150th anniversary celebrations in 1979. The landscape aesthetic in these parklands was typical of developments in Perth in the 1970s where planting of local and Australian trees in an informal landscape style was the dominant design mode.<sup>3</sup>

Nearby Heirisson Island, formed from the extensive mud flats which had thwarted the earliest maritime explorers, and spanned by the Causeway bridge, was also developed in a similar manner around this time as a wooded, somewhat isolated retreat, featuring casuarinas, eucalypts and sedges along its river banks. The island, once promoted as a possible venue for the Olympic Games in the 1940s, is now home to a small community of urban kangaroos. The rehabilitation of these areas was not without controversy. The City of Perth resisted calls for the closure of its rubbish disposal sites despite evidence of toxic effluent seeping into the Swan River and campaigns by leading environmentalists and local celebrities such as Rolf Harris.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Sewerage and Gas Works Sites**

The northern part of the Burswood Park public golf course has been developed on wasteland where the filter beds for Perth's first reticulated sewerage system were once located. Like the rubbish disposal sites, the filter beds, which were in use from 1912 until 1936, were finally abandoned after years of public complaint about noxious odours and numerous investigations into pollution of the river.

The septic sewerage system, a new method of sewerage treatment in the late 19th century, was adopted in Perth as an answer to the public health problems of the growing metropolis. It was both economical and well suited to Perth's deep

sandy soils. However, as critics later pointed out with a touch of parochial pride, that in taking 'the path of least resistance' little thought had been given to protection of 'the most attractive waterway that ever lapped the front doorstep of a capital city'.

The components of the treatment plant straddled both sides of the river, with large septic tanks on the western bank at Claisebrook and the filter beds on Burswood peninsula. The septic tanks were constructed on the Perth City Council's main nursery depot adding further degradation to what had formerly been Victoria Park, one of the city's earliest public parks along the once picturesque Claisebrook Creek. Effluent from the septic tanks was siphoned across the river to the filter beds on the eastern bank. While such decisions were consistent with environmental attitudes at the time, a heavy price was paid in the blight of these areas on both sides of the river that persisted for most of the century.<sup>5</sup>

As well as the rehabilitation of the land occupied by the filter beds, the site of the septic tanks has been reincarnated as Victoria Gardens, a small community park on the edge of the Claisebrook Inlet. It is a central feature in the showcase East Perth Redevelopment Area. Remarkably one might think, given the abuses and neglect of the past, a number of historic trees planted around the 1880s are the dominant elements in the park providing both a sense of continuity and a welcome amenity.

In close proximity, on the north side of the Inlet, there is yet another new public park, built in the late 1990s, as part of the rehabilitation of the former East Perth Gasworks site. It features public artworks incorporating equipment from the old gas works and interpretive installations recording the former industrial and aboriginal history of the land.



*Top Left:*  
Queen's Gardens, Perth  
c.1912  
*Courtesy West Australian  
Newspapers*

*Top Right:*  
Black Swan Fountain,  
Burswood Park, July 2001  
*Photo: Oline Richards*



Top:  
Citizen of the Year Lake,  
Burswood Park, July 2001  
Photo: Oline Richards

### Reclaiming the River Foreshore

Over a period of more than forty years, from the late-1920s until the mid-1970s, dredging and land reclamation along the Swan River from Fremantle to Perth and beyond, as far as Maylands and Guildford, has resulted in considerable modification or 'improvement' of the river foreshores. Raising the level of the river banks with filling from dredging and other wastes has resulted in the creation of extensive areas of public and private recreational space. Despite their obvious amenity, these broad, flat, open landscapes, grassed and for the most part thinly planted with trees, are readily recognisable as somewhat, banal man-made landscapes.<sup>6</sup>

Forward-looking planning policies dating from the mid-1950s have ensured that Perth's river frontages remain in public ownership, providing the city with an enviable system of linear parklands extending along the main waterways of the metropolitan area. Criticism of these 'improvements' notwithstanding, there remains considerable scope for future enhancement of these foreshore landscapes in the hands of imaginative municipal authorities and skilful landscape designers.

The most extensive river reclamation occurred in the 1950s and 1960s for the construction of the Narrows Bridge and freeway interchange. Public dismay at this loss of the riverside amenity was such that considerable efforts were made to mitigate the impact of the complex system of roads and freeway overpasses built on the reclaimed land. The resulting landscape treatment of the area, included extensive planting of a wide variety of trees, mounded landforms, ornamental lakes with rustic bridges and fountains. In landscape terms the development has not been as successful as it might have been, but nevertheless enjoys popular approval.<sup>7</sup>

### Claypits and Quarries

While the river foreshores, lakes, swamps and other wetland areas, which are a feature of the

Swan Coastal Plain, probably account for the greater part of the 'wastelands' which have been converted to public open space, other types of blighted landscapes, on a smaller scale, have also contributed to the city's playgrounds.

The unique opportunities afforded by former quarry sites have provided a number of distinctive recreational landscapes. Queen's Gardens in East Perth is one of the oldest parks in the city, developed at the end of the 19th century, on land previously excavated for clay for the manufacture of bricks. Much of the charm of this small informal historic garden can be attributed to the water lily covered ponds developed from the abandoned clay pits.

At City Beach a former limestone quarry was given new life as the Quarry Amphitheatre, developed in the 1980s as a venue for ballet and other cultural performances under the stars, during Perth's benign summer evenings.

To the north of the city at Joondalup another former limestone quarry has been incorporated in the design of the Joondalup Country Club golf course. Developed in the mid-1980s, the course has a split personality. As well as traversing the usual tree-lined fairways, golfers are confronted with the visual drama as well as the challenge of driving golf balls over the spectacular chasms and cliffs created during the quarrying operations. It is not a course for beginners or the faint-hearted.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond the metropolitan area at Wellington Dam, near Collie about 160km south of Perth, 'an ugly, untidy and dangerous quarry' close to the dam became a sheltered picnic and barbecue area for the use of visitors to this scenic place in the forest landscape. The success of this work undertaken in the late 1950s, under the guidance of government landscape architect John Oldham, was a breakthrough for landscape design in the Public Works Department in WA and led to the integration of landscape design at the early stages of future major public works projects. The



thirty metre high walls of the granite quarry, which had been used to supply aggregate for the concrete dam wall, were cleaned down revealing the grain and structure of the rock, and the quarry floor was covered with topsoil, allowing trees and grass to be planted.<sup>9</sup>

#### Railway Yards, Ports and Power Stations

A national trend which gathered momentum in the 1980s and 1990s saw attention focussed on the rehabilitation of large tracts of redundant industrial wasteland such as railway marshalling yards, port facilities, and electricity power stations. These sites, developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in periods of urban and rural expansion, were usually strategically situated on river or harbour-front locations and despite being heavily contaminated had become valuable development sites, often providing opportunities for new cultural and recreational facilities.

In Western Australia the redevelopment of former railway land in Bunbury and Albany has been in the forefront of schemes to revitalise the public open spaces in these towns. And most recently, plans have been announced for the conversion of the old East Perth Power Station site to a multi-purpose tourist attraction and cultural centre with a board-walk, cafes and restaurants along the river foreshore, and museum and performing arts facilities occupying some of the many historic buildings remaining on the site.<sup>10</sup>

#### Looking Forward

Development along the city's river foreshores is now subject to numerous controls and past practices of filling with urban wastes are no longer considered acceptable. In the last thirty years, in a massive operation, contaminating wastes from many of the tip sites along the Swan and Canning rivers have been removed and the sites rehabilitated. The Narrows Interchange and Burswood Park were pioneering exercises in landscape re-vitalisation at the time they were developed. Both are now mature landscapes and an accepted part of the urban scene. In a rapidly growing city such as Perth, it is likely the majority

of people observing these places today would be unaware of the background and controversies associated with their original development.

The Narrows Interchange has undergone major disruption in recent years with construction of the second Narrows Bridge, and more intrusions are projected for the future. It is timely then to re-appraise this highly visible landscape, and to grasp the opportunity to create a more coherent landscape than currently exists. From the prospect of Kings Park, it is possible to envisage the present visual chaos below concealed beneath an all-embracing urban forest. This would restore at least some of the grandeur and tranquil beauty of the river landscape which so impressed Stirling and his compatriots at the founding of the city.

**Oline Richards**, a long-standing West Australian member of AGHS, has contributed many articles to *Australian Garden History*. A retired landscape architect she has a great insight into and enthusiasm for landscape history.

1. C.T. Stannage, *The People of Perth*, Perth City Council, Perth, 1979, pp.253, 180-1; J. Gentilli (ed.), *Western Landscapes*, UWA Press, Nedlands WA, 1979, p.362 (fig. 16.1).
2. For more detail about the development and particular management issues associated with Burswood Park see: Brian R. Wishart, 'Burswood Park-A Cinderella Story on the Banks of the Swan River', *Australian Parks & Recreation*, Summer 1994, pp.6-9.
3. *Western Australian*, 26 June 1978, p. 12; 28 May 1979, p.30
4. *West Australian*, 18 February 1950, p.2; 18 January 1979, p.39; 24 January 1979, p.4; 25 January 1979, p.2;
5. F. B. Morony (ed.) *Water: the abiding challenge*, Metropolitan Water Board, Perth, 1980, pp.63-6; J.S.H. Le Page, *Building a State*, Water Authority of WA, Perth 1986, pp.355-6
6. J. Gentilli (ed.), *Western Landscapes*, UWA Press, Nedlands WA, 1979, pp.195-7;
7. John Oldham, 'Early Landscape Architecture in Western Australia 1954-1967', *Landscape Australia*, vol.7, 3-1985, pp.219-21
8. *Sunday Times*, 'Rough on rough is par for this course', 8 December 1985, pp.48-9
9. John Oldham, 'Early Landscape Architecture in Western Australia 1954-1967', *Landscape Australia*, vol.7, 3-1985, pp.219-21.
10. *West Australian*, 26 June 2001.



Top Left:  
Opening of the Narrows  
Bridge, Perth 1959  
Courtesy West Australian  
Newspapers

Top Right:  
Overlooking Perth Water and  
the Narrows Interchange  
from King's Park, July 2001  
Photo: Oline Richards

# A Dot in the Yarra

from Silt to Sculpture

By Nina Crone



**Colin Leigh**, works with Parks Victoria. Currently Team Leader of the Indigenous Programme Unit, he was responsible for Lower Yarra Management Strategy in the 1980s. He spoke to the Editor about a man-made island in suburban Melbourne.

Herring Island, until 1952 known as Como Island, is a 7 hectare piece of Crown Land severed from the north bank of the Yarra River by a partial river diversion constructed in 1928-9. It lies 3km. upstream from the central city of Melbourne, opposite Como Park in South Yarra.

During the 1880s the northern banks of the river in Richmond were quarried for the basalt used for the roads and the bluestone foundations of many Melbourne buildings. Quarrying was abandoned in the early 1900s, leaving a series of water-filled holes separated from the nearby river by narrow ridges of unquarried rock.

Major floods occurred along the river in 1863 and in 1891 and the purpose of the "cut" was the control of flood flows, but it also gave access from the river to the newly established Dredging Depot. Between 1929 and 1933 drenched silt was deposited on the island building up levee banks around the perimeter and "in early 1934 a number of trees and shrubs, including twenty-five manna gums, were planted."<sup>1</sup> In December of that year a large flood overtopped Como Island destroying virtually all the vegetation. Repairs to the levees and replanting were effected the following year.

In 1951 the Boy Scouts Association of Victoria obtained a 21-year lease of the part of the island not used for depositing silt, and renamed it Herring Island honouring the Chief Scout Sir Edmund Herring. In July the following year another flood occurred scouring the riverbed and threatening to undermine Alexandra Avenue but the island's levee banks protected it on this occasion. The construction of the South Eastern Freeway (1958-1962) involved further removal of rock on the Richmond bank and consequent enlargement of the original "cut". Dumping of silt on the island continued as did 'beautification' works. In the winter of 1962 several hundred trees were planted

and levee banks were increased 'for the dual purpose of providing the Scouts with greater privacy and reducing noise levels'.<sup>2</sup>

By the 1970s the scouting authorities were becoming increasingly concerned that 'the Board's [Board of Works] continuing use of Herring Island as a depository for silt was preventing the Scouts from making full use of the island'.<sup>3</sup> The Board offered the Scouts compensation if they would vacate the island. This arrangement was accepted in 1971 and a lease until 1980 was negotiated between the Board and the Department of Crown Lands and Survey.

But community needs were changing and the Department did not renew the lease pointing out the high recreational potential of the island. Silt dumping ceased at the end of December 1980 when a detailed ecological study was made of the island and its vegetation.

*'Although low-lying, the island is not, however, devoid of relief. The most distinctive topographic feature is undoubtedly the levee bank around the perimeter of the island. . . . The outer side of the levee bank is steep and rises to an average height of five metres above low water-level. . . . the inside of the levee bank has a hummocky appearance. The mounds, which range from two to more than three metres high, are composed of silt dredged from the river. The mounds are of varying shape and offer considerable potential for landscaping should the area be developed for recreational purposes. . . . Viewed from the South-eastern Freeway, Alexandra Avenue or from the river, Herring Island appears to be quite densely vegetated, but this impression is somewhat illusory for the trees and shrubs are generally confined to the outside of the levee bank, the centre of the island being partly covered by grasses and scattered shrubs and partly bare.'*<sup>4</sup>

At the time the vegetation along the northern levee bank was examined in some detail and a number of well-established species up to forty years old, were identified. These included Mahogany Gum (*Eucalyptus botryoides*), River Red Gum (*E. camaldulensis*),



Prickly Paperbark (*Melaleuca styphelioides*), Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*), Silver Poplar (*Populus alba*), Pepper Tree (*Schinus molle*) and Tamarisk (*Tamarix sp.*). One isolated Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) was also found and it was thought to be a lone survivor of the pre-1934 flood planting.

On other parts of the levee bank, some pines and an impressive cypress (*Chamaecyparis sp.*) were located.<sup>5</sup> The shrub and ground cover along the bank was also relatively well developed and contained as might be expected a mixture of planted and self-sown species.

Since the 1970s, a committee of management consisting of members of the Friends of Herring Island have endeavoured to re-establish indigenous vegetation, and remove the exotic species. Management responsibility transferred to Melbourne Parks and Waterways (now Parks Victoria) in 1994 and the island is now providing recreational and conservation values on the Yarra River. Renovation of the old scout hall built in 1965 has created a multi-purpose gallery with a walled courtyard. Elsewhere on the island sculptural installations are in sympathy with native planting. The Botany Department from the University of Melbourne is now associated with the summer programme of activities held on the island.

Artists are commissioned to create site-specific sculptures using only natural materials harmonious with the bush setting. The differing types of stone brought from various locations in Victoria to the island reflect its origin as a former quarry site. Julie Collins used bluestone for her arena built into the hollow of the levee bank,<sup>6</sup> British sculptor Andy Goldsworthy's installations of Castlemaine slate and Dunkeld sandstone are set in the only natural valley on the island<sup>7</sup> and Jill Peck's large-scale boat made of Harcourt granite<sup>8</sup> points towards the city's buildings. Other sculptors have chosen to work in

wood. Robert Jacks used the remains of a fallen tree believed to be 250 years old<sup>9</sup>, while Robert Bridgewater describes his *Scaled Stem*, carved in cypress macrocarpa, as highlighting 'an inseparability and interdependence between notions of nature and culture'.<sup>10</sup> Working in an open grassed area, John Davis combined water, timber, vegetation and limestone in *A Hill, a River, Two Rocks and a Presence*.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, Ellen Jose and Joy Murphy have imagined a vision for the creation of flight. Made from Mt. William limestone, Castlemaine slate, rocks and indigenous plant species chosen for their cultural and spiritual significance, *Tanderrum* (coming together) brings together concepts of pride, culture and spirit to emphasise the coming together of the Kulin nation as one people.

Melbourne horticulturist Iain Shears has designed a garden using patterns and species which occur naturally in the temperate grasslands of Victoria – wallaby and spear grass (*Danthonia* spp. and *Austrostipa scabra* spp. 'Falcata'), chocolate and bulbine lillies (*Athropodium strictum* and *Bulbine bulbosa*), everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum* and *Helichrysum scorpioides*), billy buttons (*Craspedia variabilis*) and hoary sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans*). This wild garden starts flowering in early spring undisturbed by visitors except for one or two Friends of Herring Island who may be found planting indigenous grasses.

- 1 'Development of the Yarra River at Herring Island' Strategy Report, Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, 1981 p.16
- 2 As above p. 34
- 3 As above
- 4 As above p.36
- 5 As above
- 6 Audience 1997
- 7 Cairn 1997 and Stone House 1997
- 8 Steerage 1997
- 9 Ramp 1998
- 10 Heritage Notes, Herring Island, Environmental Sculpture Park, Parks Victoria

Opposite Top Left:  
Herring Island from the Yarra River looking towards Alexandra Avenue and Como Park, July 2001. Water flows to the right through 'the cut'

Opposite Top Right:  
Heaps of silt have given the island a hummocky appearance

Top Right:  
'Scaled Stem' carved from cypress macrocarpa wood by Robert Bridgewater

Top Left:  
An installation in Castlemaine slate and Dunkeld sandstone by Andy Goldsworthy

Below:  
'Tanderrum', the work of indigenous artists Ellen Jose and Joy Murphy

Photos: Nina Crone





# Viewpoint

## Something Missing in the Gardens



By Pam Jellie

**Top Left:**  
One of the remaining rustic rock drinking fountains in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

**Top Right:**  
The Arid Garden, one of the joys of discovery in the Gardens

**Above:**  
Reference points – old and new. The Government House tower and the modern Visitor Centre

Photos: Nina Crone

There is no doubt William Guilfoyle, when redesigning the Melbourne Botanic Gardens in 1873, intended to create a pleasure garden where 'At every step the visitor finds some new view – something fresh, lively and striking, especially when tastefully arranged.'<sup>1</sup> Added features such as the Temple of the Winds, rustic rest houses, urns and rockeries at path junctions were picturesque landmarks that gave you clues as to where you were. One could read the planting and the garden features like a relief map.

I was sorry to see that one of the minor landmarks, a rustic rock drinking fountain at the path junction between the ornamental lake and the central lawn had disappeared recently. I was assured it was not one with a giant clamshell for a basin like the one at the A Gate entrance, but it was one of several still extant in the garden and like other rock features skilfully constructed of faux volcanic rock.

They are in the tradition of the artistic grotto and horticultural builder Charles Robinette (1841–1921) engaged by Guilfoyle in late 1885.<sup>2</sup> He constructed a creative rockery incorporating a drinking fountain with sea shells as well as caves, pools and arches in a triangular area near the Anderson Street entrance (B Gate). A more ambitious rockery was created at The Bluff which was crowned by the Temple of the Winds, completed in 1902, with faux rockwork at the base of the cliff where the names of the past and present directors of the Gardens are inscribed.

In place of the missing drinking fountain is a directional signpost, one of many now positioned throughout the gardens, which means you are no longer drawn in by the gardens and its features

but that signposts direct you. Noticeboards and maps at the entrances are certainly most helpful for the first time visitor or the tourist in a hurry, but frequent directional signs mean that the joy of discovery, of exploring the gardens so cleverly designed by Guilfoyle, is diminished. The natural amphitheatre of the Gardens, with a lake that draws you to the performing area, and with Government House towering above, I would have thought, were enough to orient the visitor.

**Pam Jellie** is a practising landscape architect who has contributed to the conservation of historic gardens such as 'Titanga', 'Purumbete' and 'VUT Sunbury', the former mental hospital site. She is a past President of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society and she convened the National Conference in Melbourne in 1994.

1 William Guilfoyle, *Monthly Report of the Curator of the Botanical and Domain Gardens*, August 1873, p.26

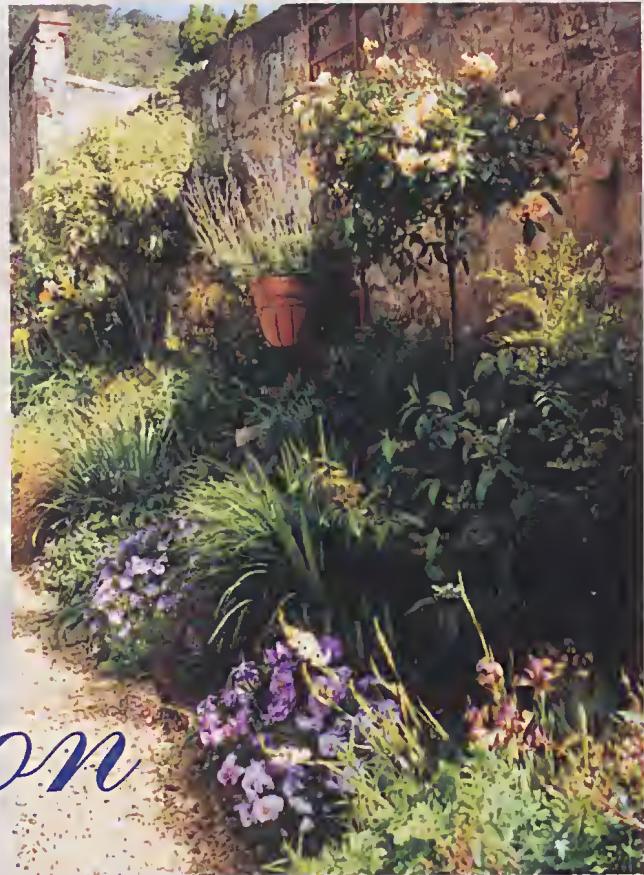
2 David Jones, 'A Craftsman of Rock: the work of Charles Robinette', *Australian Garden History*, Vol.12, No. 3 November/December 2000, pp.14-15

### Through the Artist's Eyes

Visits to private gardens, galleries and landscapes loved by artists in the area around Melbourne

- See Alister Clark's Glenara
- Lunch with Gwen Ford at Fulling
- Visit the artists' colony at Montsalvat
- Enjoy Sunday Reed's Heide
- Mornington Peninsula with Jane Alexander

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# From to *Dereliction* *Reflection*

Out of dereliction a small garden has emerged at 16 Degraves Street Hobart. It is a place for reflection on many aspects of Tasmania's history.

## Beginnings

The Hobart Rivulet tumbles down from towering Mt Wellington (1,270m) to the River Derwent in southern Tasmania. Its clear and constant water led Lieutenant Collins to choose Sullivan's Cove as the site for settlement in 1803. The Rivulet's sparkling water also attracted brewers and Cascade Brewery, now Australia's oldest, was established by the stream in 1824. There were however other, now forgotten, breweries and distilleries further downstream.

Thomas Yardley Lowes arrived in Hobart Town in 1823. Governor Sorell allocated, rather than granted, him a site of 20 acres for a distillery on the bank of Hobart Rivulet. Here Lowes constructed a distillery within four high masonry walls, but the T.Y. Lowes & Co. Distillery was not profitable as there were 16 distilleries operating at that time in Tasmania and oversupply led to meagre profits.

Sorell's successor, Governor Arthur, received a letter from the Quaker and prison reformer Elizabeth Fry in August 1823. She was particularly concerned with the plight of women and children and she suggested new ways for

housing female convicts in Van Diemen's Land as Tasmania was then known.

At that time female convicts and their children were accommodated in a section of the Hobart Gaol in Murray Street, a site considered undesirable both from the possibility of public communication with the inmates and the visibility of the executions carried out in the yard.

Four years later, in 1827, Lowes sold his distillery site to the government to use as the Hobart Town Female House of Correction. The architect John Lee Archer drew up plans for alterations and additions to the distillery buildings converting them into a Female Factory and providing subsequent plans for further development the following year. These alterations became Yard 1 of the Female Factory.

Today, the Female Factory Historic Site consists of five different yards which over time were used and developed in different sequences. Yards 2 and 3 were developed on either side of Yard 1. (See Plan 1)

The Female Factory accommodated women awaiting assignment to citizens in the colony, women under punishment for an offence committed in the colony, women expecting the birth of a child and women undergoing the six month punishment for giving birth. In addition the children of women in the prison were also accommodated.

## The Cascades Female Factory Historic Site Project



By Ann Cripps

*Top Left:*  
Perimeter wall of Yard 1 on  
the Female Factory Historic  
Site in Hobart, Tasmania

*Right:*  
The memorial garden in the  
former Yard 3 of the Female  
Factory

*Photo:* Ann Cripps

*Above:*  
Interpretive Plaque



Top Left:  
A Story in Stone: Women's Penitentiary, Hobart.  
Undated etching (trial proof)  
by Joseph Christian Goodhart. Private Collection, reproduced with permission by courtesy of the Alport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, Hobart

Top Right:  
Entrance to the former Yard 1, July 2001

Above:  
Interpretive Plaque

Opposite Top Left:  
Memorial Garden and the Reflection Pool featuring a rough-hewn washing trough

Opposite Top Right:  
Original stone gutter in the former Yard 3

It soon became obvious that the site was poorly chosen for this new purpose. Conditions were damp and severely overcrowded. Infant mortality was extremely high, due to the forced early weaning of babies, to overcrowding which spread disease and to poor diet. The public became aware of the high infant mortality rate considered it a scandal and consequently Governor Arthur authorised the construction of Yard 2 which provided solitary working cells. This sequence of complaint followed by new construction became the pattern for development on the site.

In 1841 further charges of overcrowding led Governor Sir John Franklin to approve plans for new 'Separate Apartments'. This construction formed Yard 3 adjacent to the eastern wall of the original distillery. (See Plan 2) It consisted of over 100 separate cells in two wings on two levels together with two-storey service buildings along the Degraves Street frontage. The work began in 1842 and was completed by 1845.

Yard 4 developed when plans for a new Nursery to accommodate 88 women were drawn up in June 1849 and the building were completed by 1851. The last section of the Female Factory, Yard 5, was constructed in 1852 to provide a two-storey dormitory building. The following year transportation ceased.

#### Decline, Demolition and Dereliction

For nearly one hundred years the site served as makeshift and relatively temporary accommodation for a miscellany of activities. Buildings declined and property was neglected. Initially the site was proclaimed a Gaol and House of Correction for Females. This meant that 'free' woman convicted locally or on remand could be placed on the site. From 1865 the colonial authorities used the western part of Yard 3 as a Boys' Reformatory and the eastern part as



accommodation for Male Invalids. The buildings proved unsuitable and the Boys Reformatory was closed in 1876 while the remaining ex-convicts and invalid paupers were moved.

Plans were drawn up in 1876 for Yard 3 to be converted into a prison for male convicts from Port Arthur. The exercise yards were to be roofed, the cells re-roofed and a new gallery built to provide access to the cells. The notable architect, Henry Hunter, who designed many of Hobart's public buildings, was asked to supervise the project. However he was highly critical of the plans and the scheme was abandoned. The following year Yard 3 of the Female Factory site was closed down and in 1885 the colonial authorities demolished both cell blocks in Yard 3 thereby effectively ending its use by government institutions.

#### A Commercial Site

In 1893 the site was surveyed for subdivision prior to auction. On 5th June, 1905 William Ernest Cockayne paid £50 each for Lots 9 & 10 (the original Yard 3). Thereafter there was a succession of owners until J.G. Turner Pty. Ltd. purchased part of the former yard 3 in 1942.

J.G. Turner Pty. Ltd. was a fruit processing business with premises for canning in Salamanca Place. The newly acquired Degraves Street property was the 'case yard' where the packing cases for tins of fruit were made and where the wood used in the canning factory furnace was stored. Accommodation in the remaining old two-storey buildings was provided for one employee and his wife. This appears to be the first of various commercial uses of the site including a period as a site for storing cars in the 1960s. This occasioned the flattening of the site and the making of the bitumen carpark.



In December 1986 Macpac Pty Ltd bought Yard 3, by then known as 16 Degraves Street, and began developing a factory site. It is thought that the perimeter planting of Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) was part of the landscaping required by the local council when factory plans were approved. The blackwoods are the first evidence of any formal planting on the site.

The site again changed hands in August 1994 when Michael Carnes and John Lavis renovated the factory to accommodate their business Island Produce Confectionery Pty Ltd which Michael had established in early 1991 for the production of handmade chocolate fudge.

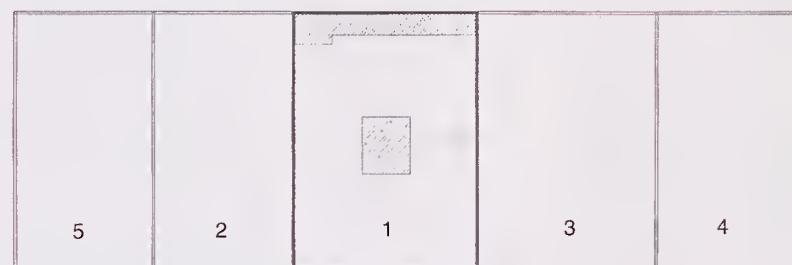
#### **A Garden and a Historic Site.**

The making of the gardens began in 1995 when part of the bitumen car park was dug up to create garden beds. The border garden bed was originally intended as a holding bed for plants that were to be transported from the Carnes/Lavis property at Fern Tree to their new property on Bruny Island when it became ready for planting. However as their interest in the history of the factory site developed, the men decided that the garden at Degraves Street should become a memorial to the women and children who had suffered in the Female Factory.

The Commonwealth Government had purchased Yard 1 to mark the International Year of Women in 1975. A series of interpretive panels was installed to recall the grim story of the women and children who once lived in this dark valley.

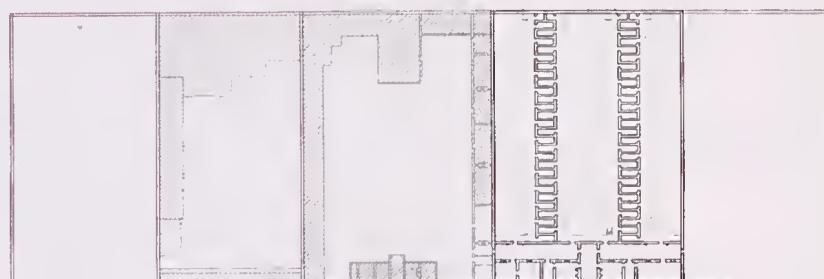
In 1997 Michael Carnes commissioned an archaeologist to undertake a 'dig' in the southwest corner of his site (adjacent to Degraves Street and the wall of Yard 1). One of the objectives was to confirm or deny the existence of underground cells. Although no evidence of cells

was found, the remains of a well were discovered. The site and the business were offered for sale in October 1999 and a new company, The Female Factory Historic Site Ltd, was formed. With the assistance of a Commonwealth Government Grant the site was bought. Another company, Island Produce Tasmania Pty. Ltd., was established to run the confectionery making business with the profit from sales used to restore and maintain the historic site.



**Plan 1**

Early plan c.1829 showing the five yards that made up the Female Factory. Yard 1 is in the middle



**Plan 2**

Later plan c.1842 showing the separate cells provided for prisoners



There are now plans for linking the stark and foreboding landscape of Yard 1 with the unexpected and beautiful garden of remembrance in Yard 3 by re-opening one of the doorways through the solid stone wall.

The memorial garden, reminiscent of a formal European garden which would perhaps have been familiar to many of the convict women transported from England, has a gravelled court with a reflection pool in which stands a washing trough used by the women prisoners. Hewn from a single block of sandstone the trough is more than a cubic metre in size.

The garden features a silver birch walk underplanted with English woodland flowers, and a deep parterre border with a mass of interesting and unusual plants – five varieties of *Tradescantia*, the Chatham Island forget-me-not (*Myosotidium hortensia*) and many varieties of campanula, aquilegia, lily and hosta. Metal trellises covered with roses, clematis and climbing alstroemeria (*Bomarea kalbreyeri*) provide vertical interest. A bed of early varieties of standard roses is underplanted with hardy geraniums and another feature is the obelisk covered with *Clematis rehderiana*.

At one end of the garden part of the archaeological excavation can be seen, protected by a shingle roofed canopy. A similar roof structure forms a pergola giving shade to some of the woodland plants, and also to visitors who pause to contemplate this evocative garden.

#### A Place for Much Reflection

There is much cause for reflection and remembrance at the Female Factory Historic Site. The desolation of Yard 1 recalls the harsh fate of the women and children. Women convicts were treated differently from their male counterparts in the 19th century. Although they were not subject to the same physical punishments, they were more closely confined and more was expected of them. They were considered worse than men because they had fallen below society's expectations of female behaviour.



Top Left:  
The first planting c.1986 on  
the site at 16 Degraves  
Street, thought to have been  
required by local council  
regulations.

Photo: Ann Cripps

Above:  
*Myosotidium hortensia*  
(Chatham Island forget-me-not) is a feature of the  
memorial garden

Photo:  
Melanie Kinsey

Top right:  
Part of the modern  
interpretive panel in  
Yard 1, 2001  
Photo: Nina Crone

Then, there is the compassion of the Quaker prison reformer Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845). She was so concerned about the condition of women in the colony that she sent James Backhouse (1794-1869) and G.W. (George Washington) Walker (1800-1859) to Tasmania to report on conditions there. Their mission to convicts and settlers was the first undertaken by Quakers in Australia. They reached Hobart in February 1832 and spent nearly six years travelling and preaching throughout Tasmania and New South Wales returning to Tasmania again in 1837. Their work was thorough and their influence had an effect on almost every aspect of philanthropic work in the colony.

Further, James Backhouse had another important interest. As a young man he had studied botany and with his brother had purchased the notable Friars' Gardens nursery in York. From Australia he sent indigenous plants back to his brother "to test their hardiness in England." His book *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies* (1843) contains much of interest about aborigines, convicts, social conditions and botany in Australia. In 1845 William Hooker named the genus *Backhousia* in his honour.

And finally, there is the association of the Fry family with the confectionery enterprise of Cadbury Fry & Pascall. In England these Quaker families were upholders of 19th century social idealism and contributors to the reform movement which believed that factories should not be purely industrial places. At Claremont in Tasmania the Cadbury Industrial Garden Village dates from 1920 and is a careful balance between an industrial site and a well-planned recreational area in harmony with the natural setting of the Derwent River. The Island Produce fudge factory and its neighbouring memorial garden continue that ideal.

**Ann Cripps** works as a consultant in the areas of research, design and restoration of old and historic gardens. She was part of the team that undertook the Conservation Management Plan for the Cascades Female Factory Yard 3 Precinct in 2000.

# Our Logo from "The Letterbox"

By Nina Crone

The National Management Committee has unanimously selected a new logo and 'made over' its suite of stationery. The garland designed by Joan Law Smith that has served to identify the Society so well for twenty-one years will, most appropriately, become the symbol of the Kindred Spirits Fund. Peter Watts, the Chairman, said the National Management Committee was keen to have a logo that was contemporary in outlook and bold in design, something that would be instantly recognisable and easy for the branches to use to 'brand' the many activities with which the society is involved.

Stephen Banham, the designer of the new logo, wanted to show the idea of growth associated with many activities of the Australian Garden History Society. Not only are members of the Society concerned with plants, their history and conservation, in gardens or in the natural landscape, but they themselves also experience multi-faceted growth in a wider, more abstract sense. There is the growth in understanding that comes through participation in the Society's activities, through readership of AGHS publications and through work for important gardens threatened with destruction.

For Stephen growth is an organic process and the logo represents not just what the Society is now, but what it will become in the future. He considered it his responsibility to anticipate the future direction of development. Discussing the 'lifespan of a logo' Stephen emphasises that a logo is the distillation of the abstract essence of an aim. If the right formula or design is selected longevity is the result. He believes that representational signage tends to focus on an element that is often short-lived and therefore it becomes dated.

Other significant factors are the practicality of the design in terms of modern reprographic processes such as web sites, fax cover sheets, photocopying and scanning. Hard-edged designs and an essentially linear style are more appropriate to contemporary electronic communication systems in contrast to such traditional forms of signage as embroidery, sign-writing, enamelwork and metalwork. Another consideration is the economics of reproduction, for instance the cost of a two-colour design as compared to a full colour design.



...."contemporary in outlook and bold in design"....

The second of Stephen's tasks was to select typeface and design the AGHS stationery. Lettering is clearly the wellspring of Stephen's life as a designer. His company name explains it all. The Letterbox. Not as in mailbox but as in toy-box, and what an exciting prospect that offers. Already lecturing in Typography at RMIT, Stephen is undertaking his Master's degree in Design as well as running a busy design practice that has collected many awards from the prestigious New York Type Directors Club and in exhibitions in Czechoslovakia and Paris. Among his prize-winning book designs are *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and Matthew Evans cookbooks, and Stephen is currently writing his eleventh book on the subject of design and typography.

Although he admits to designing four typefaces, he says such work is too time-consuming and he names the German designer Erik Spiekermann with whom he worked in the 1990s as the outstanding contemporary designer of typefaces. For AGHS Stephen selected the sans serif Avenir designed in France in 1988 and the serifed Galliard designed in the United States in 1978.

Remarkably unfazed by deadlines Stephen is the modern prototype of the *uomo universale*, the Renaissance Man, deriving his inspiration from film, forests, fashion, art, music and literature.

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## Archivist

In preparation for its 25th Anniversary in 2005 the Australian Garden History Society will be documenting its past records and achievements.

To assist this project the Society is seeking the support, on voluntary basis, of someone with archivist skills and experience.

For more information contact Jackie Courmadias on 03 9650 5043 or 1800 678 446 (freecall outside Melbourne) or email [aghs@vicnet.net.au](mailto:aghs@vicnet.net.au)

# The Bookshelf

## *The Artist and The Garden,*

Roy Strong, pub. Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Yale University Press, New Haven/ London, 2000  
ISBN 0-300-08520-6 rrp. \$153.95

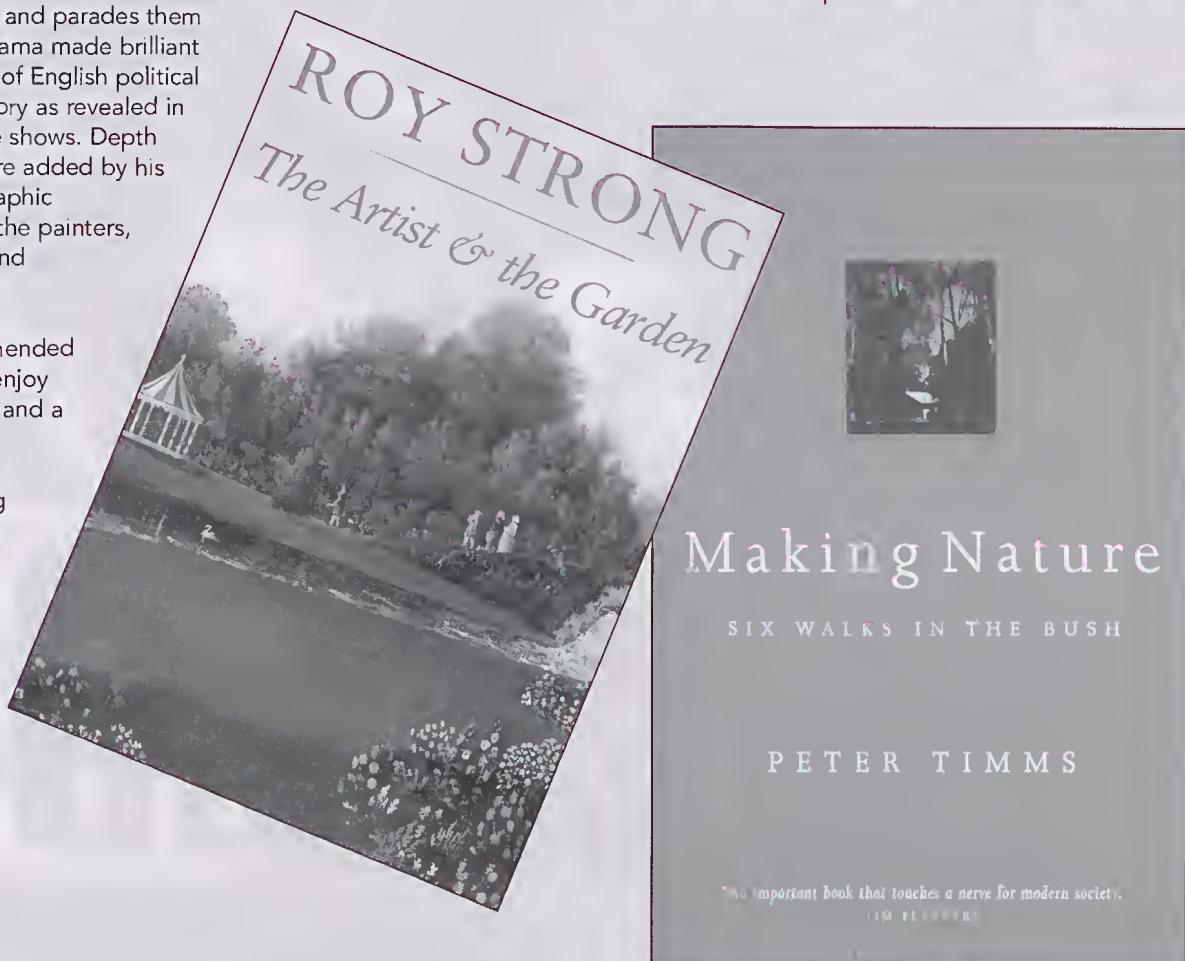
Reviewed by Trevor Nottle

Roy Strong draws on his background in art history and garden history in this survey of English gardens as represented in pictures from 1540 to the early 19th century.

Since retiring as Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum he has developed as an avid garden maker, and as a garden writer with wit and a sharp insight into garden design and the designs of gardeners. Throughout his time at the V&A he observed and made mental notes on images that carried information about gardens and their development. Drawing on this depth of knowledge he has produced several books, notably *Small Period Gardens* and *The Renaissance Garden in England*, but none so splendid as this.

While the hundreds of illustrations chosen to support the text will gladden the eye of any beholder, it is the written word that demonstrates Strong's mastery of both information and image. He marshals them and parades them across a panorama made brilliant by his analysis of English political and social history as revealed in the pictures he shows. Depth and richness are added by his detailed biographic knowledge of the painters, their patrons and associates.

Highly recommended to those who enjoy garden history and a very useful preamble for those travelling to visit English gardens.



## *Making Nature,*

Peter Timms, Allen and Unwin, 2001 rrp. \$24.95

Reviewed by Gwen Ford

*Making Nature* is structured around six bushland walks in eucalypt forest at Tallarook. It is a discursive book. The trajectory of ideas shifts from minutely observed details of the necklace ferns to Petrarch's conviction 'that experiencing new places and new views could lead not only to greater knowledge of the world, but also to personal moral development'.

This is a book more about ideas-hunting than plant-hunting, ranging as it does through history and philosophy while grounded in the landscape of the Tallarook Ranges. Peter Timms is a generous guide. He leads his readers into and around the world of the 30ha environment he shares with his partner, Robert Dessaix. The many detours he makes include acquaintance with resident wombats and echidnas, acknowledgment of his increasing success in identifying indigenous plants and a discussion of the Christian notion of duty of care: ' . . . we should not forget that ownership always implies stewardship. It's easy to pass over the instruction in Genesis that we must replenish the earth as well as subdue it.'

In the Preamble the author indicates his position clearly. He is not about to change our way of thinking by hectoring readers on environmental issues. He says '... I want to share my enthusiasm for discovery, and to encourage a similar enthusiasm in others. . .' Through lyrical prose in a spirit of fellowship with his readers he does, in fact, change our way of thinking.

Peter Timms is a powerful storyteller. Sharing his own discoveries, pleasures and enthusiasms he introduces new ways of looking and thinking about the meaning of the word 'nature'. During the third walk, *Worldly Fortunes*, he comes across two wedge-tailed eagles negotiating a territorial settlement.

*'Gathering strength, they pause, as if on cue, and spiral downwards again at speed, the larger one giving chase. Seen side-on, with wings and legs tucked in, they blur into brown bundles that might be loads of dirty washing falling out of the sky. Then, as they turn just above the tree line for another confrontation, they are miraculously unwrapped, becoming visions of formidable grace ... and beauty again.'*

The perfectly wrought tension indicates the manoeuvres made by these powerful birds. What interests the reader most is that during the ritual there was no physical contact, the dispute had reached a conclusion without bloodshed.

At one point Timms says 'Awareness is a start, but it's what you do with it that counts . . .' As he makes his own

discoveries he maintains expansive reference points, exercising his own imagination and inviting his readers to do the same, without any dressing up of ideas. Quoting Flaubert, 'In order for something to become interesting, all one need do is look at it closely enough . . .' This idea is taken further by suggesting, during a walk with a young woman blind since birth, that 'The less you can see, the more the mind is engaged; the more active your viewing becomes and the keener your attention needs to be.'

On his sixth and final walk, *Being Alone*, Peter Timms makes the connection between 'creative solitude and the mature mind'. While wombat watching on a winter evening, he muses on the nature of solitude and suggests that 'Happiness in solitude is the luxury of the unthreatened.' Alone, in the damp darkness, anticipating an elusive wombat, his contemplative peregrinations lead him to examine many of the moral issues relating to our place in the world.

Trisha Dixon's stunningly jewel-like photograph on the front cover expands to full size on the back. The picture captures a stand of russet eucalypt trunks set against the bluest of Australian skies. In one corner sits the simple mud brick cottage that provides the sense of connection so important to this writer and his partner.

*Making Nature* is an inspiring book, not in the sense that it will encourage you to rush about changing your man-made environment but because it will engage your 'curiosity and wonder'.

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# Meeting William T. Stearn

News of Professor William Stearn's death in May this year prompted memories of his visit to Australia in 1983 as the guest of the Australian Garden History Society. Professor Stearn and his wife Ruth arrived in Perth on 31 October on the first leg of an Australia wide lecture tour.

Showing little sign of jet-lag the Stearns embarked on a tightly packed schedule of visits, excursions to view the local flora and informal talks during the short period they were in Perth. Professor Stearn delivered the first of his 14 public lectures on the tour speaking at the University of Western Australia on 'The History and Art of Botanical Illustration'.

In November Professor Stearn was the keynote speaker at the Australian Garden History Society's Fourth Annual Conference held in Adelaide. His topic was 'The Introduction of Plants into the Gardens of Western Europe during 2000 Years.' Tim North later published the lecture as an 8-page supplement to *The Australian Garden Journal*. To re-read it today is to revive the memory of Professor Stearn's enthusiasm for botany and his scholarship. He made the point that gardening in Australia owes much to the introduction of plants from around the world into Europe as it was from Europe that the 'basic techniques and tools, love of plants for amenity, and their skilful use in gardens' have been derived.

Many people will remember his arresting description of gardens as 'homes for handicapped plants'. His explanation was that, in the development of gardening for pleasure, people of widely different ethnic backgrounds had long been attracted to the unusual or the abnormal in plants: whether this was double flowers, variegated or colourful foliage or unusually coloured flowers. Such characteristics often render plants sterile or less vigorous thus demanding greater care in cultivation.

Professor Stearn identified nine significant periods of plant introductions beginning with Roman times and ending in the 1930s with the increasing development of hybridisation. He gave timely warning that because hybrids invariably produce plants better suited for garden purposes they tend to supplant the parent species and in so doing put these plants at risk. He saw a role for 'botanic gardens and public parks under enlightened managements to preserve such species which, if lost to cultivation, may be impossible to reintroduce.' It is interesting to note that in 1989 the Ornamental Plants Collection Association (now the OPCAA) was formed in Melbourne for the purpose of recording and conserving historic cultivars in addition to the original species which in their turn were fast becoming lost to cultivation.

The Stearns' visit in 1983 was their first to Australia and it was appropriate that the start of their tour should be in Perth at 5 am as the sun was rising over the Darling Ranges. On the drive from Perth Airport into the city, in the surreal glow of a clear spring morning, Professor Stearn remarked with satisfaction and the observant eye of a botanist, how pleasing it was to see eucalypts growing in their natural environment.

At the time there were only 14 members of the AGHS in Western Australia and less than 800 nationwide. It was a measure of the vitality and enthusiasm of the Society in those early years, that so eminent a botanist, garden historian, and entertaining speaker was invited to Australia. And that the Society was able to attract sponsorship for his lecture tour from the Australian Heritage Commission and the British Council.

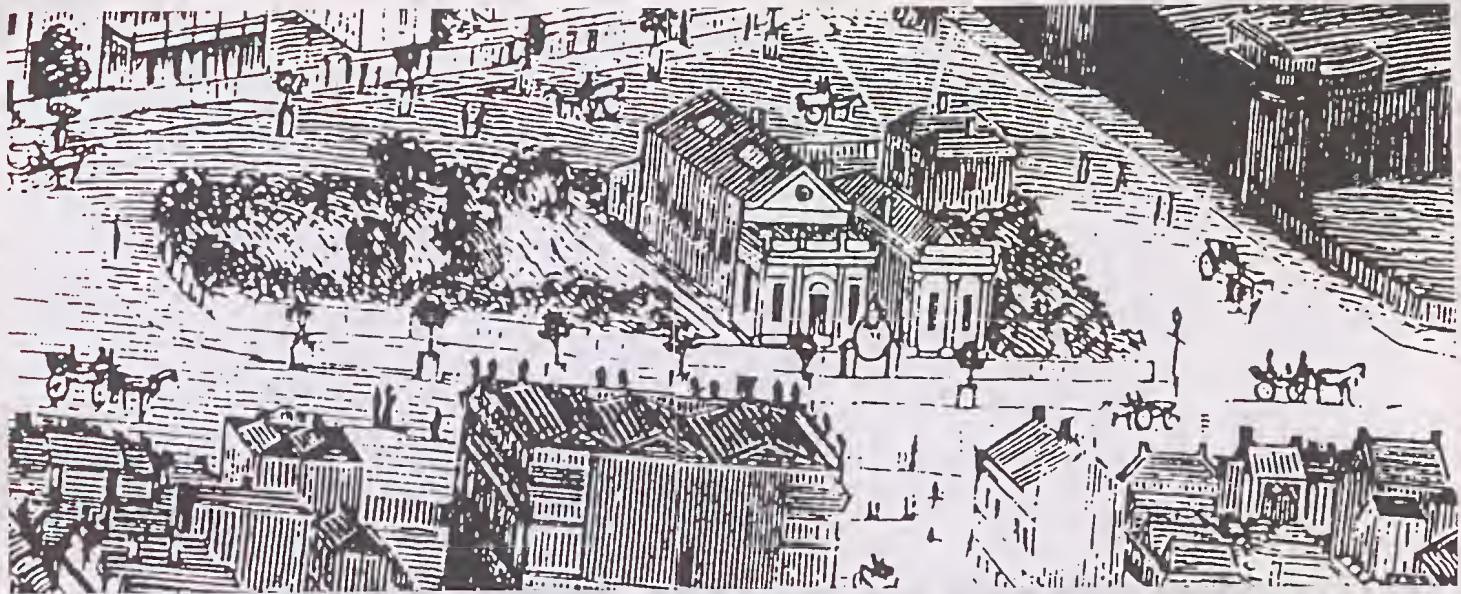
My acquaintance with William and Ruth Stearn was limited to their visit in 1983. However, from the evidence of their life and work together, and the impressive corpus of William Stearn's professional writing which numbers almost 500 books, articles and monographs, it would seem that his was a life well lived.

Oline Richards, May 2001

'Professor Stearn with Theckla Reichstein (SA), Mrs R. W. Shepherd and John Adam (both of New Zealand) at the AGHS Annual Conference in Adelaide, November 1983

Photo: By Keva North, *The Australian Garden Journal* Feb 1984, Courtesy Tim North





# Just a Minute

By Mary Ellis

The vicissitudes of Melbourne's Horticultural Hall vividly illustrate the history of Melbourne's people, the slowly grinding wheels of bureaucracy, and the determination of the dedicated few on committees to get things done.

The Victorian Gardeners Mutual Improvement Society held its first and formative meeting on 19 December 1859. The objects of the Society were to collect and diffuse knowledge on Horticultural Subjects with a view to the improvement of cultivation and development of the resources of the colony. Meetings were held on the first Monday before the full moon so members could find their way in a town without streetlights.

#### **The Land and the Building**

On 19 August 1861 it was proposed that the Society needed a building. However no further action was taken until 26 January 1866 when the need for a building to hold meetings and accommodate the growing library was again raised. On 26 March 1866 a site near the Old Melbourne Gaol was chosen. Its boundaries were Victoria, Russell and McKenzie Streets in North Melbourne. Gazetted and reserved for the Society for horticultural purposes on 30 April 1866 it served the Society for 123 years.

By July 1867 subscriptions were raised to build a hall. The government made a grant of £400 and fencing was completed by the New Year. The following February a scheme was prepared to use the land and make plans for a building, but the building committee was not empowered to take

any steps towards the erection of a hall until June. In October 1870 Mr Robinson was offered the contract but he turned it down. Then Mr Purchase [possibly Guyon Purchas], an architect, met the building committee to discuss plans for a building to cost £800. The cost of Mr Purchase's proposed building escalated to £7000 and his proposal was not accepted.

In February 1872 the Society had to write a letter protesting "action taken by Government in withdrawing from reservation the land granted to this Society" and a deputation went to see the Commissioner of Lands and Survey to ascertain the reason. It discovered that other applicants wanted a portion of the land for a hospital. In July a letter from the Office of Lands and Survey informed the Society that it should at once make use of the land. Consequently in October a portion of the land was given to the Oddfellows Society. The Commissioner of Lands and Survey allowed this "provided they pay the value of fencing".

Finally in November the building committee had specifications for the proposed hall from the architect, William Ellerker. Messrs N H Ellerker and Co. called for tenders and the lowest was accepted from Messrs Lawson and Richard for £1452. The architect received a commission of five percent. The building was a brick and cement render structure with classically derived elements in the façade composition. It was an important work of William Ellerker and a significant illustration of the transitional architectural style in Melbourne in the 1870s. Sir Redmond Barry officially opened the Horticultural Hall on 4 August 1874.



**Top:**  
Detail from a sketch c.1888-90 shows the Horticultural Hall and the triangle of land opposite the Old Melbourne Gaol. From H. Willoughby Australian Pictures 1888-1890

**Above:**  
Entrance to the Horticultural Hall in Melbourne, July 2001



Above: The eastern side of the building, July 2001

#### Care of the Hall

The first meeting was held at the new Hall on 12 May 1873, before the official opening. Its business was the appointment of someone to carry out the combined duties of Hall Keeper, Secretary, Librarian and Collector. The first incumbent, Mr J.G. Wilson, lasted less than a year. His successor Mr Roberts "in consideration of devoting the whole of his time to the various duties and interests of the Society" was paid the sum of £1/10/0 per week, together with 10% on all members' subscriptions and upon all rents received from the Hall and grounds. He was given free quarters on the premises. All government grants, donations or moneys received from other sources were exempt from any commission.

After four years and some disagreements Mr Roberts was replaced by Mr Breslin, who also fell out with the Hall Committee and was given one month's notice in May 1880. The Hall Keeper's duties were newly specified as a tenant and employee and Edward Edwards was appointed the following month. He too had trouble over the six years he was Keeper, quarrelling with the Lessee, not cleaning the Hall adequately and allowing his children to play in the Hall. Edwards resigned in September 1886 and James Goodman who replaced him remained Keeper until April 1892. Care-taking appears to have settled somewhat until 1905 when there was the succession of Mr J. Gannon (appointed February), Mr B. Mann (May) and Mr Andrews (September).

#### Use of the Hall

The Hall was used as a home for the Library, for monthly general meetings, for committee meetings and for two Shows for members and the general public each year. It was also rented out for social gatherings, religious services and quadrille clubs although, in February 1876, the Secretary of the Department of Lands and Survey queried the use of the Hall for dancing. The committee responded that there were no restrictions mentioned in the correspondence relating to the initial grant of land.

The competitions at the monthly meetings for members were: pot plant, new or rare plant, orchid in bloom, seedling flower, fruit or culinary vegetable, shrubs in flower, perennial

plants in flower, annuals, rose blooms, apples and pears. Other plants were eligible for competition according to season and strict rules had to be observed by exhibitors. The prizes were First, Second and Third Class Certificates and an amount of money "to be fixed at the end of the year."

Although used from the beginning for exhibiting horticultural specimens, there were numerous later complaints about the suitability of the Hall for this purpose, an indication of the changes in people's expectations as amenities improved. In 1934 the building was renovated, including painting the dark dado inside a neutral grey as the dark colour militated against monthly exhibits being shown to best advantage.

#### Improvements and Hard Times

In July 1883 it was decided to build another hall connected to the existing one at a cost of £1500. Plans for the extension of the Hall were approved in September 1887 and this was completed the following year. The extension, of a second storey fronting Victoria Street, with a nearly identical bay on the side, created an a-symmetrical façade. By July 1888 the Hall was in good condition with the room for monthly meetings well ventilated and lighted, the office and the Library renovated, and the grounds improved.

Money for the extension was raised from debentures, with interest of 4% per annum to be paid to debenture holders. The Society also had a bank overdraft. The completion of the work was followed by the 1890s depression and it took a long time to pay off debts.

During 1904 the financial position of the Society with respect to the Debenture Holders and the Trustees needed to be sorted out. A sub-committee was appointed to draw up a proper balance sheet and the Trustees resolved to let the Hall on condition that the Society should have use of it for shows for two days per year. The rent could be used to pay off the debentures, amounting to £1070.

Almost every year improvements were made: lighting in 1906, ventilation, the staircase boarded underneath, the library distempered and painted in 1907, and electric light

in 1910. Throughout these years interest was paid to debenture holders, the overdraft was reduced and debentures were repaid after each annual general meeting according to ballot, either £25 or £50. The annual report of June 1929 recorded that the Hall was finally free of debentures. The name of the Society was painted prominently on the Building and a Merit board was placed in the entrance.

Repairs and improvements continued over the years, new books were added to the Library, trestles and vases for exhibitions purchased, and equipment for showing lantern slides and later slide projectors and screens and a public address system were acquired to enhance the regular monthly lectures. In the annual report of July 1956 the secretary declared that the Hall was the best equipped for horticultural purposes in the metropolitan area.

The Society adopted a strategy of renovation in 1979 after the Horticultural Hall was listed on the Register of Historic Buildings and the Register of the National Estate being classified by the National Trust (Victoria) as of state significance. Works including re-wiring, re-roofing, re-plastering, re-plumbing and interior redecoration to a value of \$200,000. While these works were carried out the exhibition hall was the only fully functional room. It was regularly used by a variety of community groups. The library was secured to protect the Society's valuable collection of old books and their own records while the caretaker's cottage was let to ATV 10 for their news team.

#### A Succession of Tenants

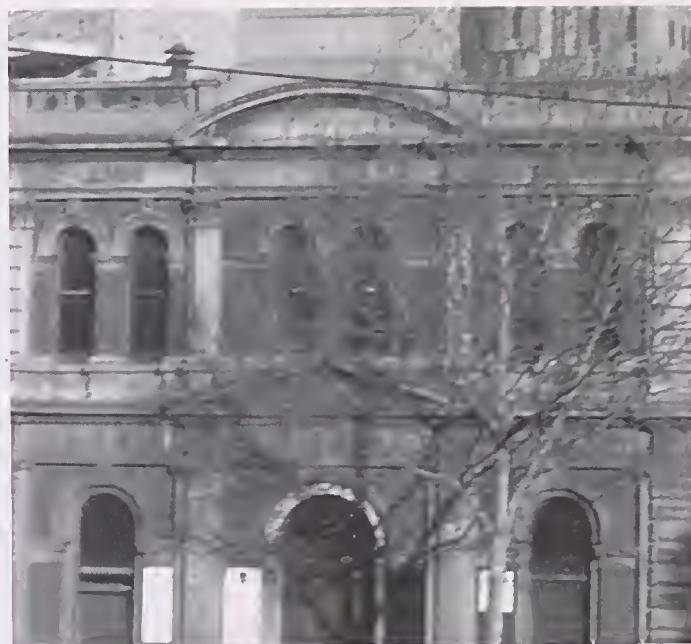
In 1898 the Society let its office space to the newly formed University High School. But when the lessee was unable to carry on the business of a school and payments slipped in 1913, the Education Department took over the lease of the hall, and the running of the school, agreeing to put the property into thorough repair. This arrangement lasted until 1927.

During 1928 several prospective tenants were considered: the Police Department for a Motor Registration Office, the Trades Hall as a hostel for the unemployed, the amalgamated Society of Engineers and eventually the Matteoli Club, an Italian social club which occupied the premises for five years.

In February 1934 the Federated Clerks Union became the new tenants for five years at £250 per year. Later that year the Clerks Union requested a new floor in the main hall and at length offered to pay more rent so the Society could afford the cost of £100. In 1936 the Secretary of Lands wrote about leasing portion of the vacant land for a service station. This was sub-let by the Clerks Union but they refused to pay the rates. Three years later the Society raised the rent by 15/- per week to £22/15/0 a month plus rates.

During the Second World War the Clerks Union sub-let the offices to the RAAF for the duration. The Horticultural Society's meetings were held at the Railway Institute, the Australian Church Hall in Russell Street and the First Oddfellows Hall although the Library at the Hall was still used for committee meetings. At the end of the war the RAAF was still the tenant but the Society determined to regain possession of the building and in 1946 the RAAF vacated the premises.

Contrary to the purposes of the reservation the Federated Clerks Union had managed a few sub-leases on the site, netting a handsome profit. For this reason the government decided to take remedial action and it came as a shock to the VHS when a Bill was passed in Parliament in August 1948



Above: The Victoria Street façade of the Horticultural Hall, July 2001

canceling the Society's Reservation. A deputation met the Assistant Minister. Much inaccurate information had been given to discredit the Society so it applied to have the Reservation restored and under new arrangements it was suggested that the Society lease the site. This it did, taking a lease for 20 years at £150 per annum, thus again obtaining full possession of the Hall by the time of the annual report in June 1949. In 1969 the lease was renewed for a further 20 years.

#### Breaking the Ties

The Society's lease was not renewed in 1989. There were proposals to sell the site, although the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands recommended that the lease be renewed, that the hall continue to be available for community use and that the land that the Caltex service station is on be made into public space. Today the service station is still there, and the Horticultural Hall, still owned by the government, is once more being renovated and has been leased.

The Minutes of the Society from 1859 to 1974 are now held in the Australian manuscripts Collection in the La Trobe Library and they are an extraordinary record of continuous work for the benefit of horticulture and its practitioners in the history of Victoria.

**Mary Ellis** gained a Ph. D. for research work with the common weed *Poa annua*. This was followed by further work at the University of Hull on *Lotus corniculatus* and the publication of her book *Virtuous Weeds* in 1992. She is a member of the Herb Society of Victoria, the Bird Observers Club and the South Gippsland Conservation Society.

#### Acknowledgments:

I would like especially to thank my sister, Sylvia Campbell, who spent many hours with me reading the Minutes of the Victorian Horticultural Society in the Secure Reading Room at the State Library. Sylvia also works as a National Trust volunteer at the Old Melbourne Gaol and while there discovered the Horticultural Hall in the sketch from Australian Pictures and this led to our visit to the Hall one lunchtime.

#### References:

- Minutes, Victorian Horticultural Society 1859-1974, Australian Manuscripts Collection, La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria
- National Trust of Australia (Victoria), File 4515
- H. Willoughby, Australian Pictures 1888-1890

# Items Of Interest

## Concern over the Future of 'Yasmar'

Following the recent State Government announcement that a new female juvenile justice centre in western Sydney is to be built, the Sydney & Northern New South Wales Branch of AGHS fears this may possibly mean that the historic Yasmar detention centre in Parramatta Road, Haberfield will close. The fate of the wonderful old house and garden is, as yet, unclear.

## AGHS Member Presents TV Programme

Richard Heathcote, vice-chairman of the National Management Committee, has been presenting the six-part series "A New Eden" for ABCTV. The programmes break through layers of history to reveal the personalities, foibles and passions of those whose helped create Australia's built and botanical heritage. Another AGHS member, Sallyann Dakis from Tasmania, did the background research for the series.

## Memorials in the Melbourne Domain

The Victorian Branch is concerned at the apparently *ad hoc* introduction of memorials into the Domain. It believes the present process used to select both the sites and designs has serious weaknesses. This concern arose after the Branch expressed the view that the design of the proposed police memorial intruded into the historic landscape.

## 'Digging the Plot' at the Writers' Festival

It was pleasing to see the inclusion of a garden writing session at this Melbourne festival. Alan Saunders, host of the ABC radio programme *The Comfort Zone*, chaired a thoughtful and challenging discussion by panel members Tim Bonyhady (*The Colonial Earth*), Marion Halligan (*The Fog Garden*) and Peter Timms (*Making Nature*).

## The AGM and NMC Elections

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Garden History Society will be held in Melbourne on Saturday, 27 October 2001 at 8.30 am. Please note earlier time than advised in the last Journal

- Items to be included on the agenda should be posted to the AGHS office.
- Five vacancies need to be filled on the National Management Committee at the AGM. Nominations for these vacancies closed on 14 September, 2001.
- If nominations exceed the number of vacancies, ballot papers will be enclosed with this Journal.
- Branches are asked to nominate their representatives to the National Management Committee and to advise the Secretary, Helen Page c/- AGHS Office.

## Thanks

Thanks to Jane Bunney, Nina Crone, Di Ellerton, Jane Johnson, John and Beverley Joyce, Cate McKern, Helen Page, Sandi Pullman, Ann Rayment and Georgina Whitehead for packing the last issue of the journal.

# AUCTION

SATURDAY 13TH OCTOBER AT 4.30PM

## BADGER'S WOOD

17 BICKLEIGH VALE ROAD, MOOROOLBARK, VICTORIA

### Four-bedroom cottage set in one-acre Edna Walling gardens

Comprising:

Entrance, living room, further split-level living, dining, OFPs, country kitchen, family meals, attic-style 4th bedroom, ensuite, family bathroom, laundry, additional WC, double carport, pool/spa, alarm, central heating.

Prized Edna Walling designed garden with climbing roses. Magnificent crab-apples, golden elm, wisteria, seasonal bulbs & kitchen garden.

Details from **HOCKING STUART REAL ESTATE** 9818 3988

OR AFTER HOURS

DIANA HEALY 0418 314 433

SOMMER OWENS on 0419 370 746



# On-Line

## New Electronic Addresses

From mid-September the Society's email and website addresses will be

Email: [info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au](mailto:info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

Website: [www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

## Walling on the Web

[www.abc.net.au/walling](http://www.abc.net.au/walling)

A new website devoted to the work and life of Edna Walling will appear on ABC Online in late September. A gardening first, the site will feature 230 of Walling's remarkable hand-drawn garden designs and also cover her writing, personal correspondence, photographs, and ideas on environmental conservation.

## Know Your Federation Flora

[www.anbg.gov.au/federation-flora](http://www.anbg.gov.au/federation-flora)

'Scarlet Blaze', one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most surprising and significant horticultural discoveries, has been selected by a state to commemorate the centenary of Federation. Find the flower your state has chosen by visiting this web-site.

## Action

### AGHS and the 'Bishopscourt' Garden

Following the successful objection to the Melbourne Anglican Church's application to sub-divide the Bishopscourt property in East Melbourne in 1999, the Victorian Branch has offered help in maintaining the garden. Discussions with Archbishop Peter Watson, Mrs Watson and the Property Manager of the Melbourne Diocese resulted in the following programme for the garden to be overseen by the AGHS.

- The drawing up of a Management Plan
- Working bees to be arranged for the garden every two months
- Publication of a feature article on the Bishopscourt garden in *Australian Garden History* with run-ons printed as a garden booklet with the proceeds from its sale being put back into the garden.
- Inclusion of the garden in Australia's Open Garden Scheme for 2002/2003
- Applications for grant funding to be made where appropriate
- Support from the East Melbourne Garden Club, the East Melbourne Group and the East Melbourne Historical Society for the above programme to be sought

## Paul Sorensen Study Group

A research group has been launched to study the life and work of the 20th century landscape gardener Paul Sorensen (1890-1983). Sorensen was born in Denmark and after being formally trained as a horticulturist in Europe moved to Australia in 1915. He soon established himself in the upper Blue Mountains where he operated his landscape design business from his famous Leura plant nursery. Best known for the National Trust garden *Everglades* at Leura, Sorensen and his son Ib left a legacy of well over fifty gardens around New South Wales.

The group is keen to hear from Sorensen garden owners, past and present, and anyone else who has had an association with Sorensen, or who holds maps, old photos and plans of Sorensen gardens. Co-founder of the Study Group, Silas Clifford-Smith hopes the group will uncover some of Sorensen's lost gardens. He says that any clues, no matter how small, to complete the picture of Sorensen's work in Australia would be very welcome.

To contact the study group telephone (02) 9569 3417 or 0402 384 199

## A Splendid Example

The Sydney Research Forum, held on 6 June, pioneered a splendid idea. Colleen Morris noted that it is unusual for researchers to allow others to see or hear details of work before it is published. The forum showed generosity, both from speakers and participants, in sharing joint knowledge and allowing tangents and further leads to be identified and followed up. The speakers and subjects were

**Peter Cousins** on *The Pioneers' Memorial Garden* on the site of the Garden Palace in Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens

**Richard Clough** read from the *NSW Pocket Almanac* (1813), perhaps the first Australian publication describing indigenous species

**Warwick Mayne-Wilson** on the history and future of the Arthur McElhone Reserve, created in 1950 on the central remnant of the former Macleay estate at Elizabeth Bay House

**Judy Adamson** on the depiction of gardens, plants and landscapes in Australian films from 1940 to 1981

**Colin Slade** on the evolution of gardening in the Blue Mountains

**Stuart Read** on the mystery of Max Shelley, Sydney garden designer and landscape architect of the late 1920s.

The format was two sets of three 10-minute talks with questions at the end and a break in the middle. Lively discussion ensued in the interval and at the end of the session. The strength of the evening was the interaction between speakers and audience.

## Southern Grampians Heritage Study

The Victorian Branch is represented on the steering committee of this study. There are several important gardens in the Shire of Southern Grampians and members from that area with information that could be included in the study should attend community consultations as advertised in their local paper or contact the Study Consultant, **Timothy Hubbard** on (03) 5568 2823

# Diary Dates

## SEPTEMBER

**8 Sat.** New South Wales, Tomago **Reflections on the former Tomago House Estate** – a talk by Michael Lehany, 11 am – 1 pm at Tomago House, Tomago (north of Newcastle). Bookings: WEA Sydney Ph. (02) 9264 2781 quoting Course No. 13WK039

**14 Fri.** New South Wales, Sydney **Knox Garden Day**. Volunteers interested in helping on AGHS stall should contact Christine Ford (02) 9449 1218

**15 Sat.** Queensland, Mount Glorious **Day Trip** Visiting selected local gardens. Wendy Lees 3289 0280

**19 Wed.** Victoria, Melbourne **Working Bee – Bishopscourt** Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

**23 Sun.** Western Australia, **Country Garden Visit**

**27 Thurs.** South Australia, Adelaide Mediterranean Garden Society, 7.30 p.m. at Urrbrae House, Waite Campus, AGM including **Plant Swap & Book Display**

**29 Sunday** Victoria, Bulla **Working Bee – Glenara** Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

## OCTOBER

**2 Tues.** Adelaide, Friends of the Adelaide Botanic Garden, 7.45 pm in Minerals Foundation Lecture Theatre, Conyngham Street, Glenside Encounter 2002 a talk by Tony Brown

**6 & 7 Sat. & Sun.** Queensland, Indooroopilly, Local Branch member, Helen McVay will have her 'family' garden open at 63 Gilgandra Street.

**7 Sun.** Tasmania, Launceston, **Plant Stall at Franklin House**

**13 Sat.** South Australia **Working Bee** The Cedars 10am – 4pm . Contact: Allan Campbell (08) 8388 7277

**13-14 Sat. & Sun.** ACT/Monaro/Riverina, Griffith **Along the Burley Griffin Way to Griffith** (and the Griffith Garden Festival) This visit will explore cultural differences in types and methods of gardening particularly the change from 19th century pastoral heritage to 20th century new farming of the irrigation era.

**13-14 Sat. & Sun.** Melbourne, RBG **The Growing Friends Spring Plant Sale** 10 am – 4pm Sat., 10 am – 3 pm Sun. Enter by E gate from Birdwood Avenue

**14 Sun.** Western Australia, Claremont **Claremont Heritage Gardens Walk** led by Regan Douglas in conjunction with the Friends of Claremont Museum

**20 Sat.** Bowral, **Retford Park Open Garden Day** 10 am – 4 pm Entry \$5.50 to aid The Helen Blaxland Foundation. Enquiries (02) 4862 1255

**20-21 Sat.-Sun.** Queensland, Allora **Federation Project** Ten gardens around Allora will be open

**25 Thurs.** Melbourne, National Gallery Women's Association **Open Garden Day** – six private gardens in the Toorak area will be open to the public. Entry \$20. Enquiries (03) 9822 8995 or (03) 9822 1909

**26-28 Fri., Sat. & Sun.** Melbourne, **22nd Annual National Conference '2001: a Federation Odyssey – Australian Gardens & Landscapes 1890-1910'** For further information contact Jackie Courmadias at the AGHS Office. Ph: (03) 9650 5043 or 1800 678 446 or E-mail: aghs@vicnet.net.au or Website: www.vicnet.net.au/~agh

**27 Oct-6 Nov.** Western Australia **The Federation Festival of Country Gardens** to be held in Bridgetown, Balingup, Manjimup & Nannup. Fifty gardens will be open with many associated activities. For details contact Peta Townsing on 1800 001 357

**29 Mon** Melbourne, **Garden Visits** – an optional day associated with the Annual Conference. For details contact Jackie Courmadias as above.

## NOVEMBER

ACT/Monaro/Riverina, Adaminaby **Visit to the Monaro High Country**

**3 Sat** Victoria, Daylesford **Working Bee – Wombat Park** Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

**12-16 Mon – Fri** Leura, NSW, **The Australian Garden** To-day, a Fund-Raising seminar at Everglades For details contact Diane Mansell (02) 4784 1938

**16-18 Fri-Sun** Queensland, Warwick, Stanthorpe & Tenterfield **Weekend Garden Visits** include 'Braeside', Chauvel Garden, Granite Gardens and 'Glenrock' Gardens Wendy Lees 3289 0280

**21 Wed.** Victoria, Melbourne **Working Bee – Bishopscourt** Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

**24 Sat** Victoria, Beaufort **Working Bee – Belmont** Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

**28 November – 2 December in ADELAIDE**

**Australia ICOMOS National Conference '20th Century Heritage: Our Recent Cultural Legacy'** Further information available from All Occasion Management Ph: (08) 8354 1465 or E-mail: occasion@camtech.net.au

## ADVANCE NOTICES

**9 -10 December, 2001 in ALBANY, Western Australia 'Investigator 200 Symposium'** celebrates the bicentenary of the voyage of **Matthew Flinders** and the botanical work of **Robert Brown**, **Ferdinand Bauer**, **Peter Good**, and the landscape art of **William Westall**. Organised jointly by the Australian Systematic Botany Society, the Western Australian Herbarium, CALM and the Wildflower Society of Western Australia. For more details visit:

<http://floribase.calm.wa.gov.au/events/investigator200/>

**2002**  
**20 May – 8 June**  
**Tour of England, Wales and Scotland** with the English Garden History Society

**4-6 October in Hobart**  
**AGHS - 23rd Annual National Conference**

**2003**  
**11-13 July in Brisbane**  
**AGHS – 24th Annual National Conference**